

SERVICE COORDINATOR PROFILE: KARENA MCDONALD, PACT SOUTHLAND

What is your history with Pact?

I applied for a job thinking that I would have a couple of months at least off from my previous employment. But I got a notice for an interview three days later and I haven't looked back. I worked at Pact's adult supported accommodation service for just under 10 years. Now I work in at Pact's Te Kaika Whakaaroaro, the only bail home for youth services in Invercargill. We work in partnership with Waihopai Hauora looking after Oranga Tamariki rangatahi. I have been working at Te Kaika Whakaaroaro prior to establishing the home, which has been open for just over two years.

What were you doing before coming to Pact?

I was a tutor at Kai Tech with students from the ages of 16 – 66 (yes 66). It was for youth who couldn't be in a mainstream school and adults who wanted to further their education.

What attracted you to the organisation?

My best friend worked for Pact for 15 years plus and told me Pact were looking for workers and I should put my name forward. At the time I had been made redundant from my previous job. I wanted to take a couple of months' break, but Pact were very fast in offering me an interview.

What is the best thing you do at work?

We support rangatahi to stop and have a look at what they are doing with their lives, help them to try better options for a happier future. The respect in the background is what everyone is given when you enter the Te Kaika Whakaaroaro doors, whether you are staff or rangatahi. Our focus at Te Kaika Whakaaroaro is for rangatahi to return to whānau, but when this is not an option we will seek alternative safe placement. I also have the privilege of working with the Southland Youth Services team who are amazing.

What is the best thing about working for Pact?

Pact understands people, the importance of individualising the person and their needs. Pact are the best employer I have had in my whole working career (there have been a few).

What have you learned since being with Pact?

- Patience.
- Flexibility - there is more than one option.
- Team work really does make the dream work.
- Listen.
- Learn to be non-judgemental – what might work for one may not for another.
- Be consistent/undeviating and uniform with every rangatahi's needs.

What are you most proud of in your role?

I work with an amazing group of people who have the same goal: showing rangatahi that we care, they are somebody, we can do it together. I can ask questions for you and get answers that you don't necessarily get told otherwise. We advocate for the rangatahi, we find a solution or help them towards a solution.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining us?

I do tell them that Pact are a fair and impartial employer with no discrimination – they are a people-orientated service, whether it's for service users or employees. I also inform them that they offer all the training that is needed for the job required.

